

## **History of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**The Commission on the Status of Women** was established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in June 1946. At its first meetings in 1947 and 1948, the Commission began to draw up its Programme of work, especially concerning the issue of the nationality of married women (a topic which the Commission had been studying since the beginning of 1948), the political rights of women and consent in marriage. The Commission was mandated to "prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women's rights in political economic, social and educational fields" and to "make recommendations to the Council on urgent problems". In 1947 the mandate was expanded to include the promotion of women's civil rights and recommendations on "urgent" aspects of women's rights should be aimed at achieving equality between men and women. They were asked to propose ways to make that happen.

**The Commission on the Status of Women** was established in the United States by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Today there are Commissions on the Status of Women from across the country, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands..

## **History of the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women**

**According to the website** - OCCSW was formed in 1995 with the purpose of recognizing and honoring women, who have made significant contributions to the improvement for women and for the citizens of Okaloosa County. Visit the website for more information - [www.occsw.org](http://www.occsw.org)

### **Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women**

1994 – Several women's organizations bonded together under the leadership of Judy Byrne Riley and Cathy Wehling. Cathy was the president of the Emerald Coast Chapter of the American Business Women's Association and Judy was active with the National Organization of Women and Shelter House. Gayle Melich was also instrumental in getting information about the Florida Commissions and she wrote the resolution to present to Nick Nicholson, county commissioner. Nick then supported the resolution to the Board of County Commissioners. (An item for funding was removed for the resolution!) The commissioning was announced at a meeting of the Emerald Coast ABWA in Jan 1995 By Nick Nicholson.

OCCSW members are appointed by the county commissioners or represent various women's organizations. There are nineteen members of the board according to bylaws. In 1995 the Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame was established and seven women were inducted. Each year a number of women are inducted into the Hall of Fame.

### ***Resolution 95-09: A resolution of the Board of Commissioners of Okaloosa County, Florida to establish an Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women.***

WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Commission on the Status of Women (FCSW) to study and make recommendations to the Governor, Cabinet and Legislature on issues affecting women and the FCSW fosters the formation of similarly constituted local commissions; and

WHEREAS, representatives affiliated with local chapters of several national women's organizations urge and are willing to work for the formation of an Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women (OCCSW); and

WHEREAS, the goals of the OCCSW shall be to represent the particular interests and concerns of all the women of Okaloosa County and to assist in bringing forth the social, economic and public environment in which women can realize their fullest potential and make their maximum contribution to Okaloosa County.

**Chairs of the OCCSW**

- 1995 – Cathy Wehling
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- 1997 – Gayle Melich
- 1998 – Ellen Holt
- 1999 – Sally Caldwell
- 2000 - Valerie Wenzel
- 2001 – Judy Byrne-Riley
- 2002 – Jeanne Rief
- 2003 – Jean Dutton
- 2004 – Laura Creighton
- 2005 – Beatrice Love-Moore
- 2006 – Kelly Humphrey
- 2007 – Judy Wiseman
- 2008 – Eddie Mae Owen
- 2009 - Jeanette Debs
- 2010 – Lois Hoyt
- 2011 – Wanjiku Jackson

The 2009 chair, Jeanette Debs, served in 1975 on a Commission on the Status of Women that was organized in Binghamton, in Broome County N.Y. They started it because the county commissioners never appointed women to any positions and said they didn't know any women who would want to serve.